

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method of characterizing relationships among members of a social network, the
2 method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a plurality of messages communicated during a dialogue between
4 members of a social network;
5 determining a purpose for each of the messages;
6 determining at least one pattern in the messages communicated during the
7 dialogue; and
8 characterizing the relationships among the members of the social network based
9 on the pattern and purposes of the messages.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
2 selecting one of a plurality of purpose categories; and
3 embedding indicia of the selected purpose category in at least one of the plurality
4 of messages.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of determining the purpose of
2 at least one of the plurality of messages by extracting the indicia therefrom.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of determining the purpose of
2 each of the messages by extracting indicia of such purpose from a body section of each
3 message.

1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the messages is an electronic mail
2 message.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the purpose determined for each of the messages
2 is selected from at least one of a note, an acknowledgement, a counter, a reverse counter,
3 a complete, a commit, an acceptance, a decline, an offer, an invitation, a withdrawal, an
4 opt-out, a request, and a question.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the pattern in the messages corresponds to one of
2 a frequency of interaction, a latency in response, a latency in completion, a successful
3 completion ratio, a nonresponsive ratio, an unsuccessful ratio, and a number of
4 participating members until completion.

1 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of analyzing the purpose for
2 each of the messages to determine the pattern in the messages.

1 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of classifying the purpose for
2 each of the messages as one of a favorable, unfavorable, and neutral type.

1 11. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of assigning a score to each of
2 the members of the social network participating in the dialogue, the score assigned to

3 each participating member being based at least in part on the purpose determined for each
4 of the messages transmitted by that participating member.

1 12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the steps of:

2 incrementing the score assigned to a particular one of the participating members
3 in response to favorable purposes associated with messages transmitted by that particular
4 participating member; and

5 decrementing the score assigned to the particular participating member in
6 response to unfavorable purposes associated with messages transmitted by that particular
7 participating member.

1 13. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

2 repeating each of the steps in claim 1 for a plurality of dialogues between the
3 members of the social network; and

4 assigning a score to each of the members of the social network based on the
5 purposes of the messages transmitted by each such member during the plurality of
6 dialogues.

1 14. The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of using the scores and
2 characterized relationships of the members to select members of a new social network.

1 15. A system for characterizing relationships among members of a social network, the
2 system comprising:

3 a message transmission-reception process receiving a plurality of messages
4 communicated during a dialogue between members of a social network;
5 a primitive-detection process determining a purpose for each of the messages;
6 a pattern-detection process determining at least one pattern in the messages
7 communicated during the dialogue; and
8 a group-performance process characterizing the relationships among the members
9 of the social network based on the pattern and purposes of the messages.

1 16. The system of claim 15 further comprising a primitive/dialogue-selection process
2 selecting one of a plurality of purpose categories and embedding indicia of the selected
3 purpose category in at least one of the plurality of messages.

1 17. The system of claim 15 wherein the primitive-detection process determines the
2 purpose of each of the messages by extracting indicia of such purpose from a body
3 section of each message.

1 18. The system of claim 15 wherein the primitive -detection process determines the
2 purpose of each of the messages by extracting indicia of such purpose from a header
3 section of each message.

1 19. The system of claim 15 wherein at least one of the messages is an electronic mail
2 message.

1 20. The system of claim 15 wherein the purpose for each of the messages determined
2 by the primitive-detection process corresponds to at least one of a note, an
3 acknowledgement, a counter, a reverse counter, a complete, a commit, an acceptance, a
4 decline, an offer, an invitation, a withdrawal, an opt-out, a request, and a question.

21. The system of claim 15 wherein the pattern in the messages determined by the pattern-detection process corresponds to one of a frequency of interaction, a latency in response, a latency in completion, a successful completion ratio, a nonresponsive ratio, an unsuccessful ratio, and a number of participating members until completion.

1 22. The system of claim 15 wherein the pattern-detection process analyzes the
2 purpose of each of the messages to determine the pattern in the messages.

1 23. The system of claim 15 wherein the pattern-detection process classifies the
2 purpose of each of the messages as one of a favorable, unfavorable, and neutral type.

1 24. The system of claim 15 wherein the group-performance process assigns a score to
2 each of the members of the social network participating in the dialogue, the score based at
3 least in part on the purpose of each of the messages transmitted by that participating
4 member.

1 25. The system of claim 24 wherein the group-performance process

2 increments the score assigned to a particular one of the participating members in
3 response to favorable-type purposes associated with messages transmitted by that particular
4 participating member; and
5 decrements the score assigned to the particular participating member in response
6 to unfavorable purposes associated with messages transmitted by that particular
7 participating member.

1 26. The system of claim 15 wherein the group-performance process assigns a score to
2 each of the members of the social network based on the purposes of the messages
3 transmitted by each such member during a plurality of dialogues.

1 27. The system of claim 26 wherein the scores and characterized relationships of the
2 members are used to select members of a new social network.